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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11
H-01 HA-05 /091 W
----------087074 291107Z /21
R 281118Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8446
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMCONSUL ZANZIBAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAR ES SALAAM 1841

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TZ
SUBJECT: THIRTEEN ZANZIBAR PLOTTERS RELEASED BY NYERERE

1. PRESIDENT NYERERE ON APRIL 26 ORDERED RELEASE OF 13 ZANZIBARIS DETAINED ON MAINLAND TANZANIA SINCE 1972 FOR PARTICIPATING IN A PLOT TO ORTHROW ZANZIBAR'S GOVERNMENT. ATTEMPT FAILED BUT ZANZIBAR LEADER ABEID AMANI KARUME WAS ASSASSINATED. RELEASE OF THE 13, TERMED AN"AMNESTY," WAS ORDERED BY NYERERE AS PART OF CELEBRATIONS MARKING 14TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNION OF TANGANYIKA AND ZANZIBAR.

2. ALL OF THE 13 DETAINEES WERE CONVICTED IN ABSENTIA IN ZANZIBAR. FOUR OF THE 13, INCLUDINGFORMER UNION MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING ABDULRAHMAN MOHAMED BABU, WERE STILL UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH. OTHERS HAD PRISON TERMS OF 15 TO 30 YEARS. MAINLAND GOVERNMENT NEVER CARRIED OUT THESE SENTENCES OR GAVE ANY INDICATION THAT IT INTENDED TO. NEITHER DID IT ACCEDE TO ZANZIBAR'S REQUEST THAT THEY BE HANDED OVER FOR TRIAL. ZANZIBAR PROCEEDINGS ESTABLISHED BABU AND SOME OTHERS OF THE 13 AS PLOT LEADERS. BABU AND THE OTHERS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN EN ROUTE TO ZANZIBAR TO LEAD THE
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COUP BUT TURNED BACK WHEN THEY RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT ATTEMPT HAD STARTED EARLY AND HAD FAILED. THE THIRTEEN WERE SEIZED BY MAINLAND AUTHORITIES AT
ZANZIBAR'S REQUEST BUT WERE NOT SENT
BACK TO ZANZIBAR AS IT WAS BELIEVED THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED WITHOUT TRIAL.

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3. COMMENT. MAINLAND'S REFUSAL TO HAND OVER BABU AND THE OTHERS WAS FOR A TIME A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE IN ZANZIBAR-MAINLAND RELATIONS. IT BECAME LESS OF AN ISSUE BUT NYERERE'S AMNESTY SEEMS A STRANGE WAY TO CELEBRATE UNION DAY. THE COMMUTATION BY ZANZIBAR THREE WEEKS BEFORE OF THE REMAINING ZANZIBAR DEATH SENTENCES IN THE SAME CASE (ZANZIBAR 50) MIGHT HAVE BEEN SEEN BY NYERERE AS CREATING A SUITABLE ATMOSPHERE FOR SETTING FREE A GROUP WHOSE CONTINUED DETENTION HAS BEEN EMBARRASSING. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ABOUT MAINLAND-ZANZIBAR CONSULTATIONS ABOUT THE RELEASE, BUT NOTE AN APPARENT TREND BY MAINLAND AUTHORITIES SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT IN EARLY 1977 OF A SINGLE PARTY FOR THE TWO TERRITORIES TO TAKE ZANZIBAR A BIT MORE FOR GRANTED.

4. ALONG WITH THE KAMBONAS (RELEASED IN EARLY FEBRUARY), BABU WAS TANZANIA'S MOST WELL-KNOWN DETAINEE. NYERERE'S ACTION QUITE POSSIBLY REFLECTS AN INTEREST IN IMPROVING TANZANIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE. THE KAMBONAS AND BABU NEVER PRESENTED A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE MAINLAND GOVERNMENT.
HANGING ON TO
THEM PROBABLY GOT TO BE MORE TROUBLE THAN IT WAS WORTH.
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